JONARDON GANERI

SELF-INTIMATION, MEMORY AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

When I am looking at, hoping for, or otherwise thinking about some object, must I be at the same time aware that I am looking at, hoping for, or thinking about it? Is thought, in Gilbert Ryle's phrase, self-intimating? Until relatively recently, it has seemed to philosophers that this is quite evidently the case. Descartes, who is often credited with the origination of the idea, said that "as to the fact that there can be nothing in the mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not aware, this seems to me to be self-evident . . . we cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us" (*Fourth Replies*: CSM II 171). Locke too states that it is "impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving that he does perceive. When we hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so" (*Essay* 2.XXVII.9), and again that "to imprint anything on the mind without the mind's perceiving it seems to me hardly intelligible" (*Essay* 1.II.5). And in Hume we find "all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness" (*Treatise* 1.IV.2). Indeed, it has generally seemed so obvious that in order to be conscious, one must be aware of what one is thinking, that those philosophers who accept the self-intimation thesis include it in their systems without offering any argument at all for its truth.

The Indian Buddhist philosopher Diṅnāga (480–540 A.D.), and his expositor Dharmakīrti, not only endorse the self-intimation thesis but give an elaborate argument in its favour. *They* had a give an argument, since in India, unlike the west, the claim that we are necessarily aware of our own mental states is a radical one. Diṅnāga derives his conclusion from certain facts about the nature of memory, and, since memory is so closely tied to the idea of personal continuity, his argument is linked with the Buddhist treatment of this fundamental issue.

1. THE DOUBLE-ASPECT THEORY OF MENTAL STATES

Diṅnāga precedes his argument[1] with a discussion of the nature of mental states, wherein he presents the celebrated Yogācāra thesis that every thought or experience has two aspects, an objectual aspect and a

Journal of Indian Philosophy **27:** 469–483, 1999.

subjective aspect. The theory is an important preliminary to his main argument, for it is in virtue of this theory that Diṅnāga is able to claim later that we can indeed remember our own past experiences.

Every cognition is produced with a twofold appearance, namely, that of itself [as subject] (*svābhāsa*) and that of the object (*viṣayābhāsa*) (*vṛtti* below §*1 k.9a*)[2]

How are we to understand this thesis? That mental states (thoughts, experiences, perceptions, willings etc.) have an 'objectual aspect' is easily understood. It is of the nature of thought that it is object-directed or intentional. This is true as much for dream-thoughts, imaginings and perceptual error as for thought about some existing object. Thoughts have what Brentano called an 'intentional object', which need not be identifiable with any actual object. It is an important part of Diṅnāga's philosophical framework, though not an important part of his argument for self-intimation, that the objectual content of a thought not be confused with an external object with which the thought is somehow (e.g. causally) related. For him, *being-of-a-chair* is an intrinsic characteristic of my thought about a chair, part of what individuates it, independently of whether there is a chair suitably related to the thought or not.

It is harder to state precisely what Diṅnāga had in mind when he spoke of a cognition's having an aspect of its own, a subjective aspect. It is certainly intended to be an introspectible feature of a thought, which characterises it over and above its being *of* a certain object. He may have had in mind something analogous to a distinction easily drawn for paintings and photographs. A photograph is always a photograph of something, but it also has its own qualities, like brightness, sharpness and contrast, factors which depend on the way the photograph was taken rather than on what it was of. An expert who looks at a photograph and says that it is over-exposed or under-developed, pays attention just to these features of the photograph itself, and may perhaps fail to notice even that the photograph was of, for example, a face. The same is true of paintings: there are many different paintings all of Christ, but what makes one "morbid", another "typically Byzantine" and so on, are the subjective qualities of the individual paintings.

I do not at all mean to commit Diṅnāga to anything like a picture theory of mental representation, but simply to illustrate one way in which his distinction between the objectual aspect and the subjective aspect of mental states might be drawn. The reasons Diṅnāga gives for drawing this distinction make it clearer what function the two aspects are supposed to perform. He says,

That cognition has two forms is [known] from the difference between the cognition of the object and the cognition of that [cognition] §*1 k.11ab*;

> The cognition which cognizes the object, a thing of colour, etc., has [a twofold appearance, namely,] the appearance of the object and the appearance of itself [as subject]. But the cognition which cognizes this cognition of the object has [on the one hand] the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object and [on the other hand] the appearance of itself. Otherwise, if the cognition of the object had only the form of the object, or if it had only the form of itself, then the cognition of cognition would be indistinguishable from the cognition of the object.

Diṅnāga here introduces the idea that, just as we can think about ordinary objects, so too we can think about our own thoughts. This idea should be sharply distinguished from the self-intimation thesis, which Diṅnāga has not yet introduced, that each thought is reflexively aware of itself. The idea here is that we are, at least sometimes, aware of our own thoughts. I can notice that I am hungry; in an unpleasant dream, I can think to myself that it is just a dream; I can be aware of myself perceiving an object in front of me. It is in order to be able to distinguish such second-order thoughts from the first-order thoughts they are about that, according to Diṅnāga, every thought must have a subjective aspect as well as an objective aspect. For obviously, in thinking about one of my own experiences, I am not attending to a set of neural impulses or any other physical characteristics of the mental state. I must be attending to an aspect of its content, and that cannot be its objectual content. The analogy with paintings and photographs is again helpful here. A painting of a painting is not the same as a duplicate of the original, and taking a photograph of a photograph is not the same as ordering a second set of prints. The second photograph takes the first as its object, and if the first photo was over-exposed, then the object of the second is an over-exposed photograph. This is perhaps the rationale behind Diṅnāga's claim that, when one is introspectively thinking about one of one's own thoughts, the subjective aspect of the latter becomes the objectual aspect of the former. That is, the objectual aspect of a second order thought = the subjective aspect of its first order thought. The double aspect theory of mental states is thus motivated as being the only way by which one can distinguish between thoughts and thoughts about thoughts, the intentional object of the latter being the subjective aspect of the former.

The role assigned to Diṅnāga's 'subjective aspect' of thought highlights what I take to be a very important feature of it. Notice that a painting of a painting of Christ is still, in some sense, itself depicting Christ. Similarly, a photograph of a photograph of a chair is itself of a chair. 'Represents' is sometimes a transitive relation. Diṅnāga himself seems to acknowledge this when he says that "the cognition which cognizes this cognition of the object has the appearance of that cogni-

tion *which is in conformity with the object*". Some modern writers use the phrase "subjective aspect of experience" to refer to the phenomenological quality of the experience, the 'how it feels' to the experiencer. Although the phenomenological quality of an experience is something over and above its intentional content, we must resist the temptation to identify this with Diṅnāga's "subjective aspect". The reason is that attending to the phenomenological quality of an experience will not give one any information as to what the experience is about. That distinguishes it sharply from the "subjective aspect" as Diṅnāga conceives of it.[3]

2. MEMORY

I stated at the outset of the previous section that Diṅnāga's double aspect theory of mental states enables him to draw a distinction, essential to his master argument for the self-intimation thesis, between remembering a past event and remembering experiencing that event. So he says,

> [That cognition has two forms follows]
> §*1 k.11c* later also from [the fact of] recollection –
> This [expression] "later also from [the fact of] recollection" refers back to "cognition has two forms". Some time after [we have perceived a certain object], there occurs [in our mind] the recollection of our cognition as well as the recollection of the object. So it stands that cognition is of two forms.

Suppose I witness a plane crash. Sometime later I might remember the crash. I might also remember the vivid perceptual experiences I had at the time of the crash. These are, however, two logically distinct memories, for it is quite possible to remember a past event without remembering experiencing that event. Remembering that p does not entail remembering experiencing that p. The example I have chosen is in fact borrowed from Malcolm, who uses it to illustrate just this point:

> As a matter of contingent fact, one does not always remember one's perception of a past event that one remembers. Suppose I saw an airplane crash and burst into flames. Subsequently I remember not only the crashing of the plane against the earth and the flames shooting upwards, but also the terror and nausea I felt. Would this be a case of my remembering "my perception" of a past event? But suppose that a few years later I still remember the crashing and burning of the plane, but I no longer remember the terror and nausea I felt. Do I still remember "my perception" of the past event? (*Memory*, p. 24).

Malcolm commits here the mistake alluded to earlier, of confusing the phenomenological quality of a perception with that subjective aspect which becomes the object of higher order thoughts about the perception, but is otherwise accurate in his description of a case where one

forgets the experience but remembers the event experienced. More mundane examples abound. I might remember the details of the 1994 Wimbledon women's final, who won, the individual rallies etc., but have no recollection of where I was or how I came to witness it. Similarly, I can remember someone without remembering meeting them, or remember a quotation without being able to remember reading it before. Diṅnāga's point here is that when one does remember experiencing an event, the object of one's memory must be something other than the event itself, for otherwise the distinction between remembering an event and remembering experiencing it would collapse. It is his double aspect theory of mental states which enables him to draw the needed distinction. In particular, it enables him to assert

P1 It is possible to remember past experiences, as distinct from past events.

This will be the first premise in Diṅnāga's argument for the self-intimation of mental states.

The argument itself appeals to a further principle about remembering, and we might discuss in it this section on Diṅnāga's theory of memory. Here, then, is the first part of his argument:

> Self-cognition is also [thus established]. Why?
>
> §*1 k.11d* because it [viz., recollection] is never of that which has not been [previously] experienced.
>
> It is unheard of to have a recollection of something without having experienced [it before]. For instance, the recollection of a thing of colour, etc. [does not arise unless the thing of colour or the like has been experienced].

Diṅnāga states here that no past event can be remembered unless it has previously been experienced. This thesis is going to be a major premise in his argument. That memory requires a past experience seems at first to be a tautologous fact about memory, but in fact the thesis needs to be stated with care. I do not remember the Battle of Waterloo, the reason being that I was not present at the time. However, I do remember that the Battle of Waterloo took place in 1815. I remember this because I was taught it at school. What memory of a past event demands is not that one has experienced that event for oneself, but that one has, at some prior time, come to think that it occurred. Thus Malcolm:

> The logical grammar of "remember" requires that if I remember *x* then previously I witnessed, learned about, or (in a broad sense) experienced *x* (*Memory*, p. 25).

We must read Diṅnāga as having this broad sense of "experience" in mind, and read his thesis as demanding just that a memory whose objectual content concerns some event entails a past mental state or

thought having the same objectual content. This previous thought need not be perceptual. The second premise in Diṅnāga's argument is thus that

P2 If S remembers an event then S previously experienced it.

P2 is of course consistent with what we earlier established about memory, namely that it is possible to remember a past event without remembering experiencing that event. For P1 demands only that there occurred some prior experience; there is no demand that that experience is itself what is remembered. The plane crash example is just such a case. The occurrence of a prior experience is a necessary condition for the occurrence of a memory, but from that it does not follow that to remember is to remember a prior experience.

3. DIṄNĀGA'S ARGUMENT FOR SELF-INTIMATION

In the above quotation, Diṅnāga states that the "self-cognition" of mental states is itself established by P2. How is this supposed to follow? We have already shown that it is possible to remember our own past experiences and thoughts (that was principle P1). Taking the remembered event in P2 to be some past experience, it follows that if someone remembers a past thought, then she must have previously experienced or been aware of that thought, in the loose sense of 'experience' introduced above. In other words,

P1 + P2 If S remembers a mental event *e* then S previously experienced *e*.

This is a straightforward corollary of P1 and P2. We are still a long way from the self-intimation thesis, that every mental event is reflexively aware of itself, for it remains a possibility that the past experience that I am now recalling was experienced by some 'third-party', and not by that very past experience itself. Diṅnāga anticipates just this objection, and the second half of his argument responds to it. He says:

Some may hold that cognition also, like a thing of colour, etc., is cognized by means of a separate cognition. This is not true because

§*1 k.12a-b*$_1$. if a cognition were cognized by a separate cognition, there would be an infinite regression –

An infinite regression would result if a cognition were to be cognized by a separate cognition. Why?

§*1 k.12b*$_2$. because there is a recollection of this [separate cognition] too.

It must be admitted that this cognition by which the [previous] cognition is cognized is [also] later recollected. So, if it should be that this [separate] cognition is experienced by the third cognition [so that it may be recollected], there would be an infinite regression.

The argument here is ingenious. Suppose that I experience a plane crash, and later recall, not just the crash, but also my experiencing it (call this *e*). Since, in order to remember any event, I must have previously experienced that event, it follows that I must have had some previous experience of my experiencing of the crash (call this e'). Suppose now that e' is not identical to *e*. Then an infinite regress threatens. It threatens when we ask, do I also remember e'? If I do, then an iteration on the above argument proves there to exist some further experience (e''), my experience of my experience of *e*, and so on ad infinitum.

It is clear that an infinite regress will ensue only if Diṅnāga can appeal to some further assumption, an assumption which entails that each subsequent higher order is itself remembered, or at least could be remembered. What can this additional assumption be? What is the meaning of Diṅnāga's claim that the cognition of the cognition is also later recollected? Well, one meaning is that it is in principle possible to remember any past experience. In other words,

P3* If S experiences an event *x* then S can subsequently remember *x*.

This is an extremely strong claim, but if it were true, it would do the work intended of it. In combination with P1, P2 and a denial of the self-intimation thesis, there would be a genuine regress, an infinite chain of distinct mental events. Can we, however, defend P3*, the claim that I can in principle remember any of my past experiences? In a later section, I will examine one way to motivate this claim, by showing that it is a consequence of Locke's theory of personal identity. Diṅnāga, however, is not committed to a Lockean theory of personal identity, and in any case P3* seems to be just false. There is, fortunately, a principle weaker than P3*, which will also serve Diṅnāga's purpose. The principle I have in mind is:

P3 If S experiences *x* at time t_1 then S can subsequently remember *x* for some time $t_2 > t_1$.

What this states is that I can remember events past experienced for at least a little while after experiencing them, even if I forget them later. P3 is the converse of P2, which states that if S remembers an event *x* at t_2 then S experienced *x* at some time t_1 where $t_2 > t_1$.

With P1, P2 and P3 in place, the claim that an experience and the experience of that experience are distinct mental events generates an infinite regress. Suppose that at time t_1 an experience $e(x)$ of some event x occurs. By P1 + P3, there could occur at some time $t_2 > t_1$ a memory $m(e)$ of that experience. Since such a memory is possible, then, by P2, there must have occurred, at some time t_3 in the interval between t_1 and t_2, an experience $e'(e)$ of e. By hypothesis, $e' \neq e$, so $t_3 > t_1$ (it can't be before, since e' is an experience of e). Then, again by P1 + P3, a memory $m'(e')$ of e' could happen at some time t_4 later than t_3, and by P2, there must therefore have occurred an experience $e''(e')$ at some time t_5 between t_3 and t_4. By hpothesis, $e'' \neq e'$, so $t_5 > t_3$. And so on ad infinitum. The combined action of P1 + P3 and P2 serves to generate an infinite sequence of temporally distinct experiences, each one having the previous one as its object.

Diṅnāga claims, surely correctly, that such a scenario is impossible. It cannot be the case that, subsequent to any ordinary experience, there follows an infinite chain of distinct higher order thoughts. His argument is that,

§*1 k.12cd.* in such a case, there could be no motion [of cognition] from one object to another. But actually such [a movement of cognition] is accepted.
Therefore, self-cognition must be admitted.

This final claim reminds one of Zeno's paradox of motion. Zeno argued that an arrow fired at a target can never in fact move. For, in order to reach the target, the arrow must first reach the half-way point, and in order to reach that it must first reach the quarter-way point, and so on. The time taken to reach the target is therefore the sum of an infinite series (0.5 + 0.25 + . . .). Zeno's mistake was to assume that infinite series must have infinite sums, but Diṅnāga makes no comparable error, unless, that is, it is possible to have an infinite number of thoughts in a finite period of time. If this is indeed impossible, then, subsequent to any experience of one object, there will follow an infinitely long avalanche of temporally distinct higher-order mental events, the mind will be occupied for ever, and will never be able to move on to some new experience of a second object.[4]

The obvious way out of this paradox is to suppose that each experience is reflexively aware of itself (i.e. that $e' = e$). That is to say,

> If S 'experiences' e then S thereby experiences experiencing e.

Since the reverse conditional is trivial, we arrive finally at a self-illumination thesis:

SI S experiences *e* iff S thereby experiences experiencing *e*.

This then is Diṅnāga's master argument for the self-intimation thesis. It brings to the fore a deep conceptual link between memory and self-intimation. In the final section, I will argue that, in the light of empirical discoveries about the mind, we cannot accept the self-intimation thesis, and will diagnose two places at which Diṅnāga's argument fails. The first pays more careful attention to what the infinite regress argument actually proves. Diṅnāga has shown at best only that at some point in the chain of higher order mental states, mental states become self-intimating, but he has not proved that ordinary first-order experiences are. I might be in pain without noticing that I am in pain, but I perhaps cannot notice that I am in pain without noticing that I have noticed this. A restricted weaker self-intimation thesis might claim only that higher order experiences at some degree become self-intimating, without claiming that every experience is so. Though much more plausible than the unrestricted version, this restricted version is still stronger than most would accept, and perhaps there is a more fundamental flaw in Diṅnāga's argument. I will suggest that it lies in the combination of P1 to P2: although remembering a past event requires a previous experience of the event, remembering that experience requires only the experience itself, and not that that experience is itself experienced.

Before that, I want to look at Locke, whose work on the relation between self-intimation, personal identity and memory is significantly illuminated by Diṅnāga's argument. Locke's account suggests an intriguing possibility, that P3, the crucial premise in Diṅnāga's argument, is a derivable consequence of certain facts about the nature of personal identity. I want to see if this idea can be defended.

4. LOCKE ON MEMORY, SELF-INTIMATION AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

Locke argues that personal identity, memory and self-intimation are extremely closely allied notions. His thesis is that to be a person is to be a self-conscious being, and that what makes a person the same person at different times is the possibility of remembering and thereby appropriating one's past conscious experiences. The famous passage in which he sets out this view is worth quoting in full:

> This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for

any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will any thing, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present Sensations and Perceptions: And by this every one is to himself, that which he calls *self*: It not being considered in this case, whether the same *self* be continued in the same, or divers Substances. For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity*, i.e. the sameness of rational Being: As far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*; it is the same self now it was then; and 'tis by the same *self* with this present one that now reflects on it, that that Action was done (*Essay* 2.XXVII.9).

The word 'person' refers to a substance just as long as it is thinking and is aware of itself thinking; a person at one time is the same as a person at a later time just in case it is conscious of that other person's thoughts. What makes me now the same person as the one who earlier this morning caught a train is that I have within me memories of certain past experiences, perhaps of thinking "shall I get some coffee now or wait until I reach the station". For Locke, self-intimation or consciousness is the mark of personhood, and co-consciousness by memory is the mark of personal identity across time. Thus

> $S_1 = S_2$ iff S_1 experiences an event x then S_2 can subsequently remember experiencing x.

It is a consequence of Locke's view, that if I subsequently forget my past experiences, then I am no longer the same person as the one who first had them: I can no longer appropriate those experiences to myself. Thus Locke's account of personal identity actually entails the strong principle about memory we considered before, P3*, that I can remember all my past experiences! The reason is that this becomes a definitional property of personal identity, it is what makes it the case that it is the same "I" now who then had those experiences.

Could we then use Locke's account of personal identity to buttress Diṅnāga's argument for the self-intimation thesis? There is an obvious reason why this cannot be done, as things stand. The reason is that the self-intimation thesis is already assumed by Locke, indeed it is what for him characterises a person at a time. Any straightforward appeal to Locke's account of personal identity would result in circularity. Nevertheless, the idea that facts about personal identity and continuity might be used to make more robust the third premise in Diṅnāga's argument seems attractive. Could we not have a criterion for personal identity, which like Locke's trades on memory, but is not committed to a self-intimation thesis. Earlier we noted that a necessary condition of

remembering a past event is that one has previously come to believe that the event occurred. This need not be by direct experience, but might include hearing about the event, or learning of it in some other way. I remember that Everest is a snow-capped mountain even though I have never seen it; rather, I have read that this is so. It might be thought that this necessary connection between present memories and past thoughts is enough to ground a theory of personal identity, one according to which I make *inferences* about my past thoughts and experiences on the basis of my present memories, rather than *directly* remembering those past thoughts and experiences. In other words,

> $S_1 = S_2$ iff S_1 experiences an event x then S_2 can subsequently remember x.

This would be as it were an archaeological theory of personal identity, where one's memories are like the present ruined evidence from which one infers back to the experiences of one's past self. Of course, it is still too strong, in that I can no more remember all the past events I once experienced, any more than I can remember all my past experiences. But, unlike Locke's own theory, it does not seem to depend on assuming that the self-intimation thesis is true. The deeper worry about such an account is whether it is strong enough. Suppose, for example, that I remember that someone asked for coffee on the train, though I do not remember actually asking for it. This does not give me any inferential grounds for identifying myself with the person who made the request! More generally, suppose I remember an action but not my performing that action. Do I thereby have any ground for inferring that the action was mine? I have a distinct memory of a bowl of breakfast cereal being eaten this morning, and infer that I would not have this memory unless it was I who ate that cereal, and in this way appropriate the action to myself. But could I not have gained the very same memory by someone else telling me that they had eaten a bowl of cereal? If the account is to work, there must be a special class of memories for which such inferences are warranted, memories of past events for which it is true that I wouldn't now have them unless I had experienced that event in the past. What could these be?

The real problem with this second account is that it permits a distinctive sort of error, which Shoemaker calls an error due to misidentification. Suppose I remember that a certain event occured, and infer that *someone* experienced that event. It is now open to me to wonder whether that someone is myself or not. However, if I remember *myself* witnessing some event ("from the inside" as Shoemaker says), there is

no such possibility: “[W]hen I know on the basis of memory that I did so-and-so in the past, it is not the case that I remember *someone* doing that thing and identify that person as myself by what I remember about him . . . [W]hen I say ‘I have an itch’, or ‘I think so-and-so’, it is not the case that I know this because I observe *somebody* having an itch, and identify that person as myself” (1984, p. 103). If I look through a complex series of distorting mirrors at my own face, it is at least possible that I might see a face and fail to recognise that it is mine – I may fail to identify the face as my own. But, as Shoemaker says, recognising one’s own experiences and memories is immune to that sort of error due to misidentification. It is impossible that I might experience a pain but wonder whether the pain is mine or someone else’s. Similarly for memories of one’s own experiences: it is impossible for me to remember a feeling of pain and still wonder whether it was my pain or someone else’s. It is this immunity to error due to misidentification that grounds the close conceptual link between memory and identity, and reveals why the second account fails.

Incidentally, Shoemaker draws another conclusion from this observation, one concerning the nature of self-awareness. He claims that when one is self-aware, one is not presented with oneself as an object at all, for if one where, the possibility of misidentification of oneself could arise: “It is essential to remembering one’s past actions and experiences ‘from the inside’ that one’s past self, the subject of those actions and experiences, does not enter into the content of one’s memory in the way other persons do” (ibid., p. 103). It seems to me that this fits very well with Diṅnāga’s dual aspect theory of mental states. In that theory, in a memory of one’s past experience, the subject enters via the ‘subject aspect’, while if one remembers another person, that person enters the memory via the ‘object aspect’. In that sense, there is an asymmetry of content between remembering myself doing such-and-such and remembering someone else doing such-and-such. In neither case, do we have a memory in which the “I” appears as an object.[5]

I have been considering the possibility that we might draw upon the insight in Locke’s account of personal identity in order to defend P3, the crucial premise in Diṅnāga’s argument. This idea does not, after all, seem viable. Perhaps, however, the principle in question needs no such elaborate defence. To claim that it is in principle possible to remember any past experience for at least some, perhaps very short, period does not seem so implausible as to need a highly theoretically committed defence.

5. AN EVALUATION OF DIṄNĀGA'S ARGUMENT

The thesis that we are necessarily and reflexively aware of our own thoughts is held nowadays to be true by virtually nobody. Discoveries about unconscious mental activity, about animal and infantile thought, and about sub-doxastic states and tacit knowledge, have largely undermined the once prevalent acceptance of the doctrine. Even Descartes, who is supposed to be one of the doctrine's originators, faced criticism on this score. Arnauld, author of the fourth set of objections to Descartes' *Meditations*, says:

> The author lays it down as certain that there can be nothing in him, in so far as he is a thinking thing, of which he is not aware, but it seems to me that this is false. . . . The mind of an infant in its mother's womb has the power of thought, but is not aware of it. And there are countless similar examples, which I will pass over (CSM II 150).

Descartes' reply is extremely interesting:

> I do not doubt that the mind begins to think as soon as it is implanted in the body of an infant, and that it is immediately aware of its thoughts, even though it does not remember this afterwards because the impressions of these thoughts do not remain in the memory (*Fourth Replies*: CSM II 171).

Notice that Descartes draws a link between self-intimation and memory, just as Diṅnāga and Locke also do, though he uses it to a very different effect. It is the nature of this link which remains of interest for us, even if we abandon the self-intimation doctrine. For in abandoning this doctrine we are forced to revise other beliefs, one's which, perhaps, we did not expect to have to give up.

A first response to Diṅnāga's argument is to notice that by this argument he has not established the full self-intimation thesis, that *every* thought is self-aware, even though it is this that he is indeed arguing for. His argument only establishes the weaker thesis that every thought at some higher order is self-aware. That is enough to break the infinite regress, and, even if it is not as much as Diṅnāga himself wanted, perhaps it is a plausible position to adopt. An example frequently cited against self-intimation is the case of a walker who, engaged in intense conversation with his companion, fails to notice that his legs are gradually beginning to ache. During a lull in the conversation, he suddenly becomes aware that his legs are aching. What we should say of this case, perhaps, is that the walker had the pain all the time, but was not aware if it all the time. Yet even if one grants this much, it may seem right to say that when the walker is aware of the pain, he is also aware that he is aware of the pain, and so on. The first step into self-consciousness is not compulsory, but once made consciousness is truly

self-intimating. That a self-intimation thesis weakened in this way would not be acceptable to most of those to have espoused self-intimation is clear (cf. Dharmakīrti's remarks at PV II: 539–540). Descartes states explicitly that

> the initial thought by means of which we become aware of something does not differ from the second thought by means of which we become aware of it, and more than this second thought differs from the third thought by means of which we become aware that we were aware that we were aware (*Seventh Replies*: CSM II 382).

That, however, is not an argument against the weakened version.

A more interesting response is possible, however. Diṅnāga appeals to two features of remembering, first that remembering a past event requires a past experience of that event, and second that it is possible to remember past experiences, and he draws the conclusion that, in order to remember a past experience, one must have had a previous experience of that experience. Does this follow? The first principle gains its credibility from the thought that the past experience as it were puts one in touch with the event, that we cannot *remember* an event unless there has been a flow of information (perhaps a causal chain?) from it to us. That's why it is absurd for me to say that I remember the battle of Waterloo, and equally absurd to say that I remember that it happened in 1815 if I have never been taught this. The demand for a past experience is for a link between the event remembered and the present memory; but, in the case of one's own experiences, no such link is needed. My past experiences, unlike arbitrary past events, are already causally available to my present memory: there is no work for a further experience to do.

To this, Diṅnāga might have said one of two things. He might have said that there is an implicit causal theory of memory at work here, and that this theory is false. More interestingly, he might have said that the line of thought trades on a confusion, the confusion between vehicle and content. My past experience is the vehicle when it helps me to remember a past event; to become itself the content of a memory it must first itself be experienced.[6] If a response along either or both these lines is possible, then after it comes to seem that Diṅnāga's argument is a plausible one, and that its conclusion, the weakened version of the self-intimation thesis, might be acceptable.

NOTES

[1] Others to have examined Diṅnāga's argument include Th. Stcherbatsky (1930, pp. 163–168), Matilal (1986, pp. 148–160), and Hayes (1988, pp. 140–142). Dharmakīrti

states: “all thought is self-intimating” (*sarvacittacaittānām ātmasamvedanam, Nyāyabindu* 1.9). On Dharmakīrti, see also Caturvedi (1978).

[2] All quotations from Diṅnāga follow the translation of Hattori (1968).

[3] Diṅnāga’s theory of consciousness sharply contrasts here with the Sāṅkhya position to which he goes to some lengths to criticize. The Sāṅkhya theory is, as Schweizer (1993, p. 852) puts it, that “the conscious aspect of subjective experience is entirely disengaged from its semantical or representational form”. For Diṅnāga’s criticism, see Hattori (1968, pp. 52–62).

[4] See Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika* II, pp. 513–514 (Pandey’s edition).

[5] For a stimulating review of discussions of the issue in non-Buddhist Indian schools, see Taber (1990).

[6] Chakrabarti (1992, p. 108) turns the criticism on its head: “upon one prevalent version of Buddhist epistemology, one aspect of the preceding mental state is also the object (the *ālambana*), the casual and intentional support of the succeeding mental state. So here we seem to have a peculiar collapsing of the owner and the object of the cognitive state. That may not daunt the Buddhist idealist who professes the doctrine of reflexive self-awareness of individual perceptual states. But it is surely incompatible with realism about the object . . . ”. However, I fail to see how it follows that the vehicle-content distinction is unavailable to Diṅnāga.

REFERENCES

Caturvedi, G. L. (1978). ‘The Concept of Self-Luminosity of Knowledge in *Pramāṇavārttika*’, *Rtam* 10: 27–36.

Charkabarti, A. (1992). ‘I Touch What I Saw’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LII: 103–116.

Descartes, R. (1986). *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated by J. Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hattori, M. (1968). *Diṅnāga, on Perception*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hayes, R. (1988). *Diṅnāga on the Interpretation of Signs*. Studies of Classical India, vol. 9. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Locke, J. (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by P. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Malcolm, N. (1977). *Memory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Matilal, B.K. (1986). *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pandeya, R.C., Ed. (1989). *The Pramāṇavārttikam of Dharmakīrti*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Ryle, G. (1949). *The Concept of Mind*. London: Hutchinson

Schweizer, P. (1993). ‘Mind/Consciousness Dualism in Sāṅkhya-Yoga Philosophy’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LIII: 845–860.

Shoemaker, S. and Swinburne, R. (1984). *Personal Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stcherbatsky, Th. (1930). *Buddhist Logic*, vol. 1. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. (Reprinted by Dover Books, 1962).

Taber, J. A. (1990). ‘The Mīmāṃsā Theory of Self-Recognition’, *Philosophy East and West* 40: 35–57.

Department of Philosophy
University of Nottingham
Nottingham, U.K.